

BYE 2879-63
Copy 1 of 9

3 July 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT : Meeting with Vice Admiral W. A. Schoech, USN, Chief of Naval Support, Regarding IDEALIST Carrier Operations

1. At Commander Holcomb's request I met late in the morning of 3 July with Admiral Schoech in his office at Main Navy in the presence of Commander Skidmore, USN, and Captain Martin D. Carmody, USN, to review for the Admiral the background and progress to date on our study for the carrier conversion of U-2's. Commander Skidmore was representing Admiral Taylor, the new Director of the Office of Naval Intelligence.

2. I reviewed for Admiral Schoech the background leading to the institution of the carrier study, beginning with General Carter's suggestion of 21 March 1963 that such a study be undertaken, but also including mention of SAC's earlier study on the same subject some time ago and Kelly Johnson's original engineering study on adapting the U-2 to carriers made in 1956 and 1957. I explained that the increasing difficulty of obtaining staging bases in third countries was primarily the motivating factor in deciding to take a look at the feasibility of U-2 carrier operations; I reviewed for him the IDEALIST level of effort in Fiscal Year 1963, the number of aircraft currently possessed and soon to be converted, and in general tried to give him the flavor not only of our operations, but the system of requirements and priority determinations which make our operations possible, i. e., COMOR, USIB, Special Group, etc.

3. Admiral Schoech was very receptive to the idea of converting the U-2 for use on carriers, and although he did not say so, appeared to be gratified to learn that the projected scope of such activities would be on a sporadic rather than continuous basis. He made repeated mention of the Navy SIOP commitments which limit the steaming radius of the attack carriers on station so that they are not beyond range of assigned targets and said that of the carriers presently in commission in the Navy there were seven CVA types

BYE 2879-63
Page 2

(1959 and subsequent commissioning dates) which he felt could be considered for use for this purpose. These are the "Forrestal", "Saratoga", "Enterprise", "Ranger", "Independence", and "Kitty Hawk". Two additional carriers of this class are programmed--the "America" to be launched in 1966 and the hull, as yet unnamed, scheduled for commissioning in 1967. These carriers offer the best hangar deck accommodations and flexibility, although in a pinch the three CVA's of the "Midway" class, namely the "Roosevelt", "Coral Sea", and "Midway", might possibly be used. Present Navy levels of effort call for only five carriers on station projected through 1964, including two in the Mediterranean and three in WESPAC. The balance of their available carriers are either "cruising" or in shipyards. Of the seven CVA types noted above, only the "Saratoga", "Ranger", and "Independence" presently offer the Airborne Systems Support Center (ASSC), which is a vital adjunct for the processing and initial flash readout of "B" camera film on board. The "Ranger" is presently in dry dock in Seattle having this additional center installed. The "Independence" is due to sail for the Mediterranean on 6 August to relieve the "Saratoga" presently there.

4. The net impression I obtained from the above description of carrier assets by Admiral Schoech was that while the Navy was only too glad to participate in the projected IDEALIST U-2 operation from carriers, they would need to be instructed by JCS to do so, and there probably would have to be some adjustment of their SIOP commitments in order to permit U-2 operations on a launch and retrieve basis. I reassured the Admiral that our study at present was principally being conducted on a "in-house" basis, and that before a U-2 flew from a CVA, there would be many echelons of approval, including NRO, JRC, JCS, and Special Group to be gone through, and that in the last analysis the President himself would probably have a hand in any determination to employ the U-2 capability in this fashion. By way of rounding out the Navy's CVA fleet, I should note that there are four other carriers in this class, but these are basically upgraded CVS vessels of much smaller dimensions, tonnage, and flexibility for U-2 operations. These are the "Ticonderoga", "Shangri-La", "Hancock", and "Oriskanny". All in all the meeting with Admiral Schoech was pleasant and I believe useful in obtaining his support for this projected activity. I told him that we could not look forward to a capability before 1 February 1964, assuming that all approvals would be forthcoming following the submission of our study.

cc: [redacted]
Mr. Elder

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